

KINGDOM PRAYER & STUDY GUIDE
WEEK 4:

"PRAYING WITH POWER"

FEBRUARY 3-9, 2019

FOLLOWING
JESUS:

EXPLORING CHRISTIAN

"BEST PRACTICES"

FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE



WINDSOR VILLAGE
Church Family

FOLLOWING JESUS:

**EXPLORING CHRISTIAN
“BEST PRACTICES”
FOR A MEANINGFUL LIFE**

*KINGDOM PRAYER & STUDY GUIDE
FEBRUARY, 3-9, 2019*

**Week 4:
PRAYING WITH POWER**

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Day 22:

The Context of Connection

1. Center Down

Before we begin today's spiritual excursion, please take a few moments to breathe! Take three slow, deep breaths, expanding from your abdomen; try not to raise your shoulders. As you inhale, whisper, ***"Connecting with You, Lord..."*** As you exhale, ***whisper, "...brings us hope."***

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

(Feel free to pause at any time during your reading to reflect on, thank, praise, or acknowledge God's stirring in your thoughts and emotions.)

In these days [Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God. And when day came, He called His disciples and chose from us twelve, whom He named apostles: Simon, whom He named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. And He came down with us and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of His disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear Him and to be healed of our diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch Him, for power came out from Him and healed us all.

(Luke 6:12-19, ESV)

For further exploration:

Videos: <http://bit.do/LPCaldwell>

<http://bit.ly/SyriacPrayer>

(Note: Jesus and His followers likely first spoke the Model Prayer in Aramaic, a dialect of Hebrew. You can find it still sung and recited today in a related language called Syriac, as in the video above)

Book: *Praying to Change Your Life*, by Suzette T. Caldwell

Articles: <http://bit.do/MatthewLP> (scholarly)

<http://bit.do/LPBevins>

3. Kingdom Prayer

Marvelous Father, we thank You for the Body of Christ. Thank You for the bright and prosperous future that You have for each of us. Thank You for the blood of Your precious Son, Jesus Christ, that brought us all near to You. Great is Your faithfulness. Your mercies are fresh every morning. We praise Your great and awesome Name. Your Name is holy! It is because of Your faithfulness that we are kept strong in You and the power of Your might.

Faithful Father, we declare that the Body of Christ are confident we have been raised from the dead along with Christ, and we are seated in the heavenly realms

because we are united with Him. We are new people. Our old lives are gone, and a new life has begun! Lord, it is Your will that we be joyful always, ceaseless in prayer, and thankful in all circumstances. In Jesus' Name, we declare that we are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. We do only those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. We declare that wisdom will enter our hearts, and knowledge will fill us with joy. Wise choices will watch over us and understanding will keep us safe. We decree that we are living wisely and making the most of every opportunity.

Holy Spirit, help us to strip off every weight that slows us down; especially the sins that so easily trip us up. Teach us to run with endurance the race God has set before us. Search us, O God, and know our hearts. Test us and know our anxious thoughts. Point out anything in us that offends You, and lead us along the path of everlasting life. Help us to daily trust in the Lord with all of our hearts and not lean to our own understanding, to seek His will in all that we do so that He can show us which path to take. Show us how to make divine connections with others who will hold us accountable and help keep us focused and pressing toward the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us. Lord, show us the place and position that You have ordained for us in Your Kingdom. Help us as the Body of Christ to stand strong in our Kingdom faith.

Compassionate Father, forgive us collectively and individually for the sinful acts that we have committed against You, including: idolatry, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, sexual sins, selfish ambitions, envy, drunkenness, division and disobedience. Forgive us for times when we have lost sight of who we are in Christ Jesus. Father, forgive me for *(list any sins that you have committed)*.

Holy Spirit, remind us of those we need to forgive and help us to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit, bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. *(Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal names or faces of people that you may need to forgive. As He reveals them say, "I forgive name of person(s)." Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in your soul caused by unforgiveness.)*

Holy Spirit, help us not to yield to temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Almighty God, You alone are God. You are the First and the Last. It was Your hand that laid the foundations of the earth; Your right hand that spread out the heavens above. When You call out the stars, we all appear in order. Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, the power, the glory, the victory, and the majesty. Everything in the heavens and on earth is Yours, O Lord, and this is Your Kingdom. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture References for the Written Text: *Ephesians 2:13, Lamentations 3:23, Psalm 99:3, Ephesians 6:10, Ephesians 2:6, II Corinthians 5:17, I Thessalonians 5:16-18, Romans 6:22, Proverbs 2:10-11, II Corinthians 6:14, Colossians 4:5, Hebrews 12:1, Psalm 139:23-24, Proverbs 3:5-6, Philippians 3:14, Matthew 6:13, Isaiah 48:12-13, I Chronicles 29:10-11*

4. Concepts to Consider

Within The Windsor Village Church Family we are imminently blessed to sit under the teaching and example of Pastor Suzette Caldwell and her many years of devoted instruction on how to pray according to Jesus' Model Prayer. Throughout this week, we are going to take the time to slow down and investigate some of the aspects of the Model Prayer through the lenses of historical Christian practice, language, and associated spiritual disciplines that are meant to enhance and support what we are already learning from Pastor Suzette.

Today, we will begin by situating the Model Prayer in its cultural, Biblical, and linguistic contexts.

The most common Hebrew word for prayer is “teffilah” [teh-FEE-lah] which generally means “to connect.” To connect human persons--made in God's image--to our Creator, to connect God's purposes through humanity with the earth and to re-connect with our true selves. These “reconnections” reflect Jesus' summary of Torah (the life-boundaries and teachings of God found in the first five books of the Bible), “Love the Lord your God with all your being and love your neighbor as much as you love yourself.” (see: *Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Mark 12:30-31*)

For Jesus and His student-followers, prayer was indeed a central part of everyday life. Then, as now, observant Jews prayed and “connected” at least three times a day (morning, afternoon, and evening), and the *Amidah* [ah-me-DAH] or “standing prayer,” and the *Shemah* [sheh-MAH] “Hear, O Israel...” (see: *Deuteronomy 6:4–9, Deuteronomy 11:13–21 and Numbers 15:37–41*) are integral to these prayer times.

Jesus’ Model Prayer appears to have its roots in the *Amidah* [ah-me-DAH]. An early version of this prayer came into common practice during the time of Jesus and He used it as the scaffolding for the prayer we find in both a communal/public form in Matthew 6:9-13, and a more private form in Luke 11:1-4. These two settings indicate that the prayer was used in both public and private settings by the early Church and that its content applies to both our inward and outward lives.

The following chart compares the content of Jesus’ Model prayer with the blessings found in the *Amidah*, (aka “*Shemoneh Esrei*” [sheh-MOAN-eh ess-RAY] or “18 Blessings”).

States of Master's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)	Shemoneh Esrei
<p>1. Worship (vs. 9) <i>Our Father Who sits in the heavens, May You and Your Name be hallowed (sanctified).</i></p>	<p>1. G-d as the protector of the Forefathers 2. G-d as the power that makes for salvation 3. G-d as the source of holiness 4. For knowledge</p>
<p>4. Repentance (vs. 12) <i>And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those that sin against us.</i></p>	<p>5. For the strength to repent 6. For forgiveness</p>
<p>3. Requests (vs. 11) <i>Give us of Your bread from day to day.</i></p>	<p>7. For relief from affliction 8. For healing 9. For bounty and material prosperity 10. For the ingathering of the exiles</p>
<p>2. Restoration (vs. 10) <i>May Your government come, May Your will be done in the heavens and in the land.</i></p>	<p>11. For the establishment of the reign of true justice 14. For the rebuilding of Jerusalem 15. For the coming of the Messiah 16. For the acceptance of our prayers 17. For the restoration of the Sanctuary</p>
<p>5. Protection for righteous (vs. 13a) <i>And do not bring us into the hand of testing, but watch over and guard us from all evil.</i></p>	<p>12. Against slanderers and heretics. 13. For the support and protection of the righteous</p>
<p>6. Thanksgiving (Praise) (vs. 13b) <i>For Yours is the government, and all the power, and all the glory, for ever, and ever. Amen!</i></p>	<p>18. Gratitude as man's response to G-d's work in the world 19. For peace</p>

From *Back to the Sources: Reading the Classic Jewish Texts*, by Barry W. Holtz, pg. 41,
Simon & Schuster; Reprint ed., 1986.

As you can see, Jesus' Model Prayer for His followers has a long history that it is designed to give us connection and grounding, and to offer us a glimpse into the heart of God and His loving, restorative desires for humanity.

5. Reflection Questions

a. **Personal Reflection:** Since the Model Prayer was designed both for public and private use, what does this say about God's desires for my prayer life?

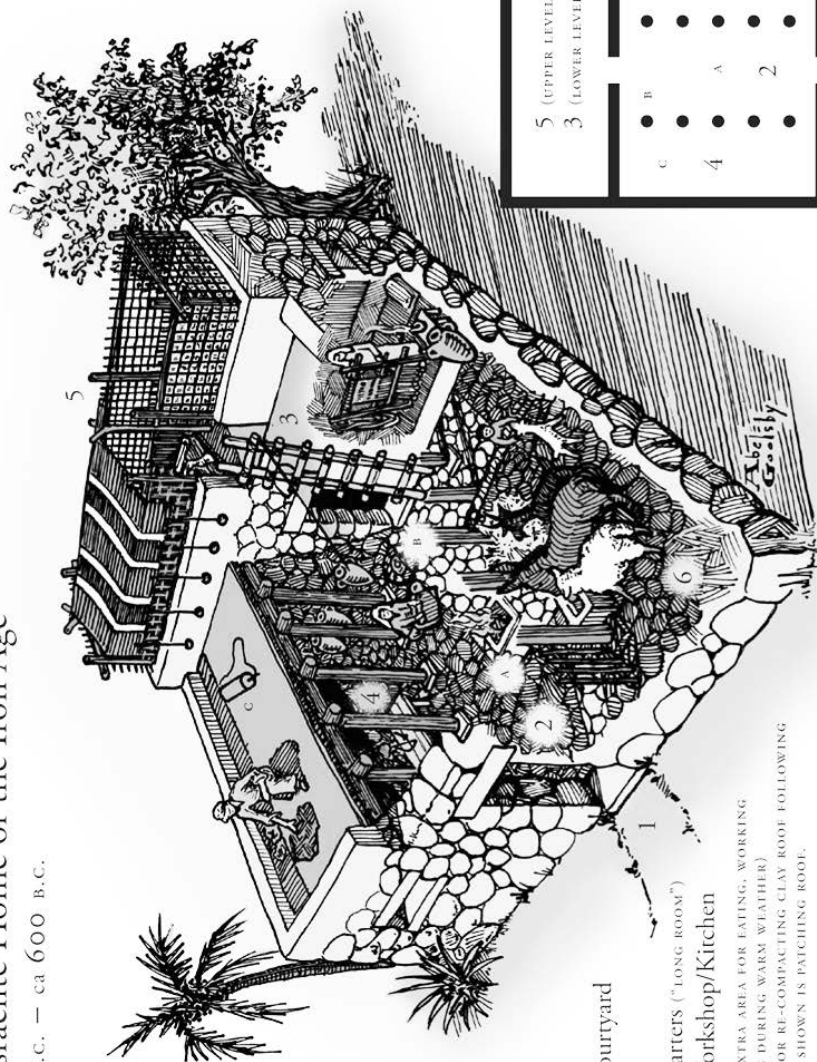
b. **Kingdom Reflection:** The Model Prayer demonstrates God's cosmic redemptive perspective. How does the content of the prayer help us look beyond ourselves and begin to see our place in God's Kingdom work?

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture passages you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Scriptural word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.

Typical Israelite Home of the Iron Age

ca 1,300 B.C. — ca 600 B.C.



1. Entrance

2. Central Courtyard

A. FIREPIT

B. CISTERN

3. Living Quarters ("LONG ROOM")

4. Storage/Workshop/Kitchen

5. Rooftop (EXTRA AREA FOR EATING, WORKING AND SLEEPING DURING WARM WEATHER)

C. ROLLER - FOR RE-COMPACTING CLAY ROOF FOLLOWING

RAIN. MAN SHOWN IS PATCHING ROOF.

6. Animal Pen

Day 23:

Plenty Good Room in Our Father's House

1. Center Down

Before we begin today's spiritual excursion, please take a few moments to breathe! Take three slow, deep breaths, expanding from your abdomen; try not to raise your shoulders. As you inhale, whisper, ***"You are our good..."*** As you exhale, whisper, ***"...and loving Father."***

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scriptures

(Feel free to pause at any time during your reading to reflect on, thank, praise, or acknowledge God's stirring in your thoughts and emotions.)

"Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. You parents—if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give us a stone instead? Or if we ask for a fish, do you give us a snake? Of course not! So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask Him." (Matthew 7:7-11, NLT)

"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not

*so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.” Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. **If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also. From now on you do know Him and have seen Him.**” (John 14:1-7, ESV)*

For further exploration:

Videos: <http://bit.do/OntheFathersMind>

<http://bit.do/FatherhoodofGod>

<http://bit.do/PlentyGoodRoom>

Book: *Epic of Eden*, by Sandra Richter

Lecture #1: <http://bit.do/RichterEoE1>

3. Kingdom Prayer

Heavenly Father, we thank You for blessing the United States of America throughout the years. Thank You for surrounding our nation with Your favor, grace and mercy. Thank You for being our source, supply and hope. Thank You for entrusting us to pray for our leaders. Thank You for unifying our nation and for continuing to bless us. Your faithful love endures forever. Lord, Your majestic Name fills the earth. Your glory is higher than the heavens. May Your glorious Name be praised! May it be exalted above

all blessing and praise! You alone are the Lord. You made the skies and the heavens and all the stars. You made the earth and the seas and everything in them. You preserve them all, and the angels of heaven worship You. We, Your children bless You!

Invincible Father, as Your people, we humble ourselves, pray and seek Your face. We believe that as we turn towards You, You will hear from heaven, forgive our sins, and heal our land. We are expecting Your eyes to open and Your ears to be attentive to our prayers. As a nation, we declare that we will live together in unity. We confess that as a nation we will be of one mind, we will sympathize with each other and love each other as brothers and sisters. We will be tenderhearted, keep a humble attitude and will not repay evil for evil or retaliate with insults when people insult us. Lord, Your Word admonishes that a city or house divided against itself will not stand. We declare that our political, civil, business and religious leaders will work together to bring peace and unity into our nation. We commit to praying for our political leaders and those that are in authority over us so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by Godliness and dignity.

We are seeing and hearing a lot about division in our nation on the news. Find Scriptures about unity and begin to declare them over our city, state and nation:

Holy Spirit, we ask that You circumcise the hearts of the Christian members of Congress and use them as a catalyst for change. Help the Household of Faith to find ways to be the light in the midst of all

the negativity and darkness in our nation. Please continue to heal the wounds that cases of injustice along with careless rhetoric from the media and politicians have created in our nation. Cast out the spirit of fear that has gripped the hearts and minds of so many Americans and help us to get back to being a nation of people who looked out for their neighbor.

Faithful Father, forgive our nation for its many sins. Forgive us for racism, sexism, ageism, idolatry, lying, deceit and character assassination. Forgive us for being self-serving, boastful, proud and arrogant. Forgive us for not acknowledging Your authority and for compromising Your truth. Forgive the Body of Christ for not praying more fervently about the situations in our nation. Forgive those who continually stir up confusion and strife. Lord, forgive me for *(list any sins that you have committed)*.

Holy Spirit, remind us all of those we need to forgive and help us to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit, bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. *(Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal names or faces of people that you may need to forgive. As He reveals them say, "I forgive name of person(s)." Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in your soul caused by unforgiveness.)*

Holy Spirit, as a nation, help us not to yield to temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Victorious Lord, there is none like You. You are great and Your Name is full of power. Who would not fear You, O King of the nations? That title belongs to You, alone! Among all the wise people of the earth and in all the kingdoms of the world, there is no one like You. You are the King of glory. You are the Lord of Heaven's Armies. You are worthy, Lord our God, to receive glory, honor and power. You created all things and they exist because You created what You pleased. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture References for the Written Text – Psalm 86:15, Psalm 99:3, Revelation 4:11, Psalm 86:1, Mark 4:39, Amos 5:24, Matthew 6:13, Isaiah 48:12-13

4. Concepts to Consider

When Jesus addresses the Creating, Covenant God as “Our Father” in His Model Prayer and instructs His student-followers to do likewise, He is inviting us into a familial relationship we were not expecting. In the pool of ancient Jewish images, there is none more basic than the *ébet* ‘av” [bait-ahv] **בֵּית אָבִי** or “Father’s House.” It is the cultural location for safety, shelter, identity, inheritance, and provision. This enclosed compound traditionally featured a few two-story stone homes with flat roofs that accommodated the eldest married couple (which included the “father” or patriarch), their adult male children with their wives and children, servants, and domestic livestock.



The love and care that Jesus shows His frightened followers on the eve of His crucifixion in John's Gospel is beautifully reassuring. He reminds us that we are not without a place, a home. We have rooms reserved for us in our Heavenly Father's *bet'av*.

In the same way, Jesus calls us home. Through His death, burial, resurrection and ascension He has opened the "narrow gate" and made it possible for all the wandering sons of Adam and daughters of Eve to return to the "Father's House," if we will choose to turn around and step onto the road that leads to life. And where is this road? It is Jesus Himself. *He* is the pathway (John 14:6). *He* is the door (John 10:9). *He* is the Brother (Hebrews 2:11-12) and Son (John 3:16-17) that invites us to take up residence in "*Our* Father's House."

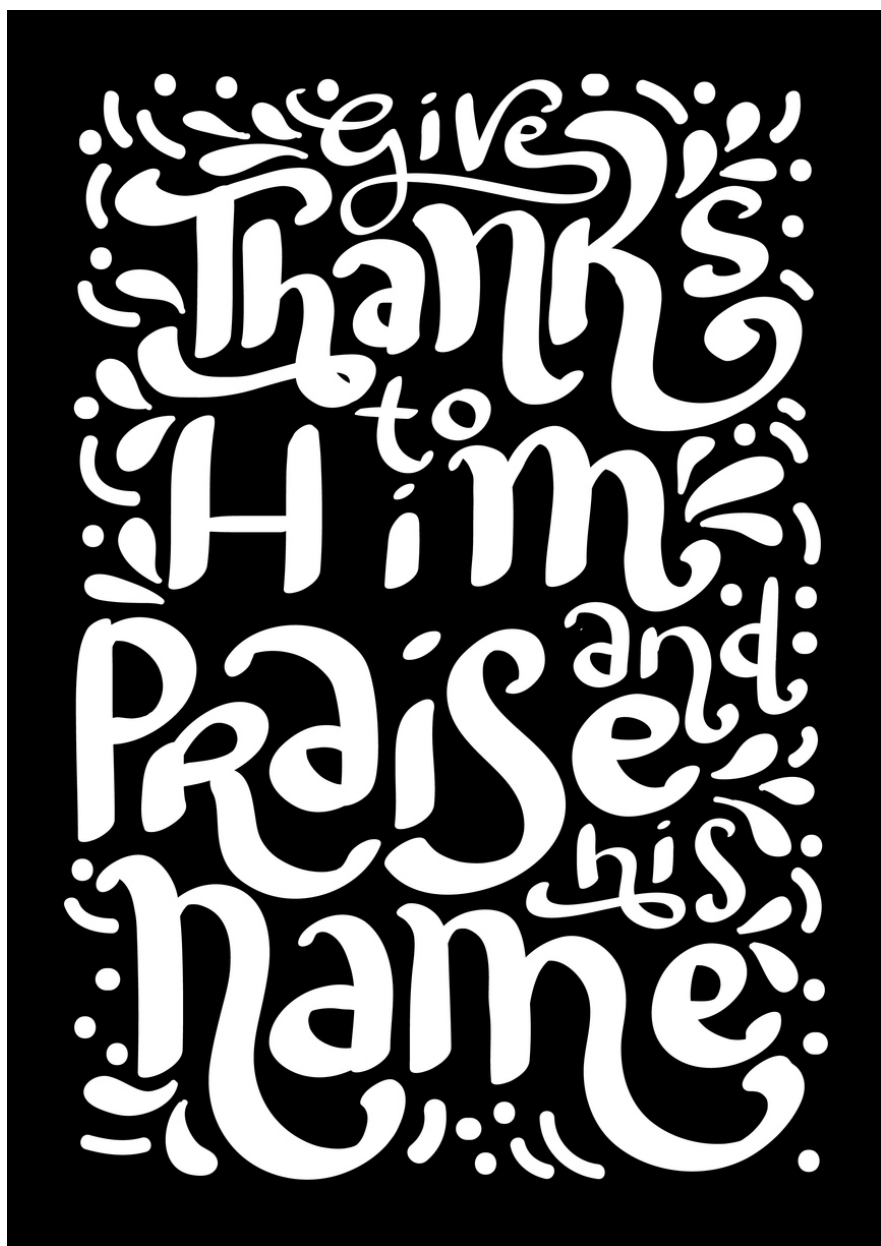
You see, everything is *relational*--not transactional--in the Divine Household. It's about Who you know and Who knows you (Luke 13:22-29). You can't buy,

negotiate, cogitate, stumble or steal your way into the House. You must be born (again) into it (John 3:3).

5. Reflection Questions

a. Personal Reflection: Take some time today to meditate on the Biblical image (*“visio” in week 2 guide*) of you “arising and going home to your Heavenly Father.” And of the “Father seeing you, feeling love and compassion, and running to embrace you.” (Luke 15:20) What did you experience during this exercise?

b. Kingdom Reflection: As you observe the world and people around you, how can you help others see that we too are invited to have a place in the “Father’s House?”



Day 24:

Praise Rehearsal

1. Center Down

Before we begin today's spiritual excursion, please take a few moments to breathe! Take three slow, deep breaths, expanding from your abdomen; try not to raise your shoulders. As you inhale, whisper, ***"We enter Your Presence..."*** As you exhale whisper, ***"...with praise and thanksgiving."***

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

(Feel free to pause at any time during your reading to reflect on, thank, praise, or acknowledge God's stirring in your thoughts and emotions.)

*And when the priests came out of the Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had consecrated usselves, without regard to our divisions, and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, our sons and kinsmen, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with 120 priests who were trumpeters; and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make usselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the Lord), **and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the Lord,***

***"For He is good,
for His steadfast love endures forever,"*** *(Psalms 106, 107, 118)*

*The house of the Lord was filled with a cloud, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the house of God.
(2 Chronicles 5:11-14, ESV)*

For further exploration:

Videos: <http://bit.do/SwansonThanks>

<http://bit.do/RomansWorship>

<http://bit.do/WrightWorship> (academic/60 min)

3. Kingdom Prayer

Our Father, we thank You for dwelling in our worship. Thank You for our Pastors who glorify Your Name through expository preaching and teaching. Thank You for blessing our church with members who are dedicated to Your Kingdom. Thank You, Father, for the exuberant praise and sound that is heard during our worship experience. Thank You for Your Son, Jesus Christ, who makes our worship experience possible. You are great and perform wondrous deeds. You alone are God. We praise You for Your loving kindness and for Your truth and faithfulness. Holy Spirit, we thank You for Your manifested presence saturating the sanctuary and people. Father, we acknowledge that this is Your doing and it is marvelous in our eyes.

Lord Jesus, You said that Your house would be a house of prayer for all nations. Therefore, as a Church Family, we will rejoice always, pray without ceasing and give thanks in everything. We will shout with joy to You. We will worship You with gladness and come before Your presence singing joyfully. We will acknowledge that You are the Lord, our God! By faith, we confess that every member of our Church Family will worship You in Spirit and Truth. By doing this we will become the true worshipers You are seeking. We decree that as we enter into Your sanctuary with our thanksgiving and praise, the spectacular sounds that are heard during our worship, will be as the Levites praised You, and Your glory cloud will fill the house. We declare that the Spirit of the Lord rest upon our Pastors. You have anointed them to preach good tidings to the poor. We declare that all persons who attend our worship celebrations and Bible Studies will be saved, healed and delivered. Lord, we confess that as we receive Your Word, it will be a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We will all be doers of Your Word and not hearers only.

Holy Spirit, we ask for a fresh anointing upon our worship celebrations and Bible Studies so that lost souls will be compelled to come to Jesus Christ. Father God, please inhabit our praise. Holy Spirit, draw us into communion with our Father and Christ. Each time we gather, bless us to have a personal encounter with You. Unify us and knit our hearts together. Sanctify and purify our hearts so that our worship is a sweet aroma to God, our

Father, as we sing melodious songs. Please give our Pastors and Laity members continued strength, discernment and wisdom as they serve. Help them to serve in humility, with the spirit of excellence and a garment of praise. May all who attend our worship celebrations experience Your love, compassion and mercy.

Loving Father, please forgive us for the sins of disobedience, hypocrisy, selfish-ambitions, pride, gossip, and perversion. Forgive those of us for not praying and fasting consistently. Forgive those of us for not studying Your Word. Forgive us for wrong attitudes and sin in our hearts that prevent us from obeying You. Holy Spirit, remind us all of those we need to forgive and help us to be quick to forgive.

Holy Spirit, as a Church Family help us all not to yield to temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

God Almighty, You are our Sovereign Lord. You are awesome in all Your ways. Your works are great and marvelous. All of Your ways are just and true. Now to You, the King, eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture References for the Written Text: Psalm 86:10, Psalm 100:5, Psalm 118:23, Matthew 6:10, Isaiah 56:7, I Thessalonians 5:16-18, Psalm 100:1-3, John 4:23, Psalm 100:4, II Chronicles 5:12-14, Isaiah 61:1-2, Psalm 119:105, James 1:23, Hebrews 13:15, Matthew 6:13, I Timothy 1:17

4. Concepts to Consider

“Praise” in the Hebrew Scriptures generally denotes “speaking the attributes of God,” or “speaking the saving story of God.” “Thanks” often means “confessing the works and the response of God on behalf of His people.” To be clear, however, the line between these two terms can sometimes be a little fuzzy in the Biblical text. We often appear in parallel/synonymous poetic structures and tend to enhance one another.

Psalm 69:30

*I will **praise the Name of God** with a song; I will **magnify Him with thanksgiving**.*

Psalm 95:2

*Let us **come into His presence with thanksgiving**; let us **make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise!***

Psalm 106:1

***Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord**, for He is good, for His steadfast love endures forever!*

Psalm 106:47

*Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the nations, that we may **give thanks to Your Holy Name and glory in Your praise**.*

The bottom line is this: both “praise” and “thanks” in a worship setting are directed to the Lord alone. *He* links the two meanings together. *He* is the Common Denominator worthy of our thanks and praise!

Worship is at its core a re-enactment of the Creation Story (Genesis 1-3), *and* it is a rehearsal of our life in the New Creation (Revelation 21). Indeed, one of the oldest orders of worship for the celebration of Holy Communion beautifully preserves these concepts of creative and re-creative worship:

*[Priest:] O God: holy are You, almighty, all-powerful, good, awesome, merciful, most compassionate to Your creatures; **Who made humanity from earth after Your own image and likeness**; who gave him the joy of paradise; and when he transgressed Your commandment, and fell away, did not disregard nor desert him, O Good One, but chastened him as at merciful Father, called him by the law, instructed him by the prophets; and afterwards sent forth Your only-begotten Son Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, into the world, **that He by His coming might renew and restore Your image...** *[the Priest continues...]* may I not be as a slave of sin cast out, but as Your servant may find grace and mercy and forgiveness of sins before You, **both in the world that now is and in that which is to come.***

(From The St. James Liturgy, developed throughout the first five centuries of the Church; <http://bit.do/st-james-liturgy>; <http://bit.do/st-james-text>)

In the Garden of Eden, our First Parents squandered our royal, image-bearing position and refused to take authority over a crafty beast of the field (a snake) and so “what happened was this: People knew God perfectly well, but when we didn’t treat Him like God, refusing to worship Him, we trivialized ourselves into silliness and confusion so that there was neither sense nor direction left in our lives. We pretended to know it all, but were illiterate regarding life. We traded the glory of God who holds the whole world in His hands for cheap figurines you can buy at any roadside stand... we traded the true God for a fake god, and worshiped the god we made instead of the God who made us—the God we bless, the God who blesses us. Oh, yes!” (Romans 1:21-22, 25, MSG)

Worship is supposed to help us understand who God is, who we are, and what our responsibilities are in God’s created order. Putting the Living God front and center

gets the focus off of us and reorients our life-compass to the “true north” of Jesus Christ. He showed us how to live a fully human life, empowered by His Spirit, as we were intended to live since the foundation of the world. Let us offer the Lord some thanks and praise!

5. Reflection Questions

a. Personal Reflection: Take some time to praise the Lord for just being Who He is and for His salvation. Thank God for what He's done and is doing.

b. Kingdom Reflection: Because worship is meant to demonstrate the story of God's creation and re-creation, how can worship be a means of bringing others to Jesus?

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Scriptural word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.



Day 25:

Wordy Prayers

1. Center Down

Before we begin today's spiritual excursion, please take a few moments to breathe! Take three slow, deep breaths, expanding from your abdomen; try not to raise your shoulders. As you inhale, whisper, "***The Word was made flesh...*** As you exhale, whisper, "***... and dwelt among us.***"

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

(Feel free to pause at any time during your reading to reflect on, thank, praise, or acknowledge God's stirring in your thoughts and emotions.)

*May my song of prayer draw near before You, O Lord; according to Your Word, enable me to understand. May my supplication come before You; according to Your Word, save me. My lips will utter praise when You teach me Your statutes. My tongue will proclaim Your Word, for all Your commandments are righteous. May Your hand be [ready] to help me, for I have chosen Your precepts. I yearned for Your salvation, O Lord, and Your Torah [teaching] is my occupation. May my soul live and praise You, and may Your judgments help me. I went astray like a lost lamb; seek Your servant, for I did not forget Your commandments.
(Psalm 119:169-176, Judaica)*

For further exploration:

Videos: <http://bit.do/prayerbook>
<http://bit.do/PrayingGen2>

3. Kingdom Prayer

Our Father, we thank You for Your Word. Thank You for the opportunity to increase our wisdom and understanding within The Windsor Village Church Family. Thank You for the opportunity to grow in Christ. Lord, You are good, and Your faithful love endures forever.

Righteous Father, it is not Your desire for us to be unskilled in the Word of righteousness like babes in Christ, but You want us to be developed to recognize the difference between right and wrong like those who are spiritually mature. Therefore, we will study Your Word!

Holy Spirit, enlighten our hearts through the Word of God. Help each of us to fully obtain knowledge of the Father's will so that our lives will always honor the Lord, and we will produce every kind of good fruit.

Forgiving Father, please forgive our sins. Forgive us for not learning more about You through the study of Your Word. Holy Spirit, remind us of those we need to forgive and help us to forgive.

Holy Spirit, help us not to yield to temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Triumphant Lord, You are the eternal King, the unseen One who never dies; You alone are God. Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture References for the Written Text: *Psalm 136:1, Hebrews 5:13-14, Colossians 1:9-10, Matthew 6:13, 1 Timothy 1:17*

4. Concepts to Consider

The closing prayer of Psalm 119 brings into sharp focus the use of God's Word as a foundation for prayer. We observe that the "ideal Bible student" modeled here in Psalm 119 saturates their requests with God's Word and allusions to His character that have been gained from diligent study. The student knows he still has more to learn and that knowledge itself is not enough. But God Himself enables the student's ingestion and digestion of the life-principles gleaned from the Word. The more the student learns, the more informed and powerful her prayers will be.

When we pray with our feet firmly rooted in the rightly-divided Word, we do not pray alone. Remember that Jesus, the Living Word, and the Holy Spirit, the Life-Breath of the Word, continually make intercession for us and advocates for us within the Triune Reality of God (*Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1; Romans 8:27*).

We can be assured that God desires us to grow in understanding His Word so that we can be more strategic in our Kingdom prayers and ministry. There

is much the Lord desires to do through His followers in the world that is blunted because His people “*perish for lack of knowledge*” (Hosea 4:6).

A good place to start learning to study the Bible for yourself:

<http://bit.do/BasicBible>
(Free, reputable, online course)

5. Reflection Questions

a. Personal Reflection: While the Bible does *not* infuse our prayers with any kind of “magic,” it does offer us the proper building blocks for constructing prayers that align with the heart and will of God. We are created to partner with God, as His image bearers, and we do that best when we know His character as revealed in His Word. What specifically will you do today to begin responsibly studying the Bible?

b. **Kingdom Reflection:** Our Kingdom effectiveness is closely tied to our Kingdom knowledge. As you grow in your study of God's Word, ask the Holy Spirit to begin to reveal how events and situations outside yourself may be better understood through the lenses of sound Biblical principles.

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Scriptural word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.



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Day 26:

‘Fessing Up

1. Center Down

Before you begin today’s spiritual excursion, please take a few moments to breathe! Take three slow, deep breaths, expanding from your abdomen; try not to raise your shoulders. As you inhale, whisper, **“Our hearts, O Lord...”** As you exhale whisper, **“...are open before You.”**

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scriptures

(Feel free to pause at any time during your reading to reflect on, thank, praise, or acknowledge God’s stirring in your thoughts and emotions.)

*Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let us pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. **Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed.** The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed fervently that it might not rain, and for three years and six months it did not rain on the earth.*

Then he prayed again, and heaven gave rain, and the earth bore its fruit. (James 5:13-18, ESV)

*[David sang,] When I was silent, my bones decayed with my moaning all day long. For [both] day and night Your hand is heavy upon me; my freshness was transformed as in the droughts of summer, forever. I would inform You of my sin, and I did not conceal my iniquity; I said, “**I will confess my transgressions to the Lord,**” and **You forgave the iniquity of my sin forever.** (Psalm 32:3-5, Judaica)*

For further exploration:

Videos: <http://bit.do/Transgression>

<http://bit.do/Iniquity>

<http://bit.do/DefineSin>

3. Kingdom Prayer

Eternal Father, we thank You for being the just Judge. Thank You for establishing peace, justice and righteousness in the United States. Lord, we will praise You with all of our hearts!

Immortal Father, we command justice to run down like water and righteousness like a mighty stream in America. We confess that justice and righteousness will prevail in homes, churches, schools and communities.

Holy Spirit, please arise in our nation's government and cause Your enemies of racism, partiality, confusion and discord to be scattered. Heal our nation from the instances hate has inflicted upon our citizens.

Abba Father, forgive our nation for acts of sinfulness, including injustice, hate, prejudice and voter suppression. Holy Spirit, remind us all of those we need to forgive and help us to be quick to forgive.

Holy Spirit, help us all not to yield to temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

Magnificent King, Your Name, Lord, endures forever, Your fame is known to every generation. Yours, Lord, is the Kingdom, the power, and the glory, forever. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

***Scripture References for the Written Text:** Philippians 4:7, Psalm 86:12, Amos 5:24, Matthew 6:13, Psalm 135:13*

4. Concepts to Consider

There is an old Scottish saying that offers “confession is good for the soul.” This adage, of course, is based on Biblical statements like the ones we just read today. But what exactly does it mean to confess our treachery, failures, and brokenness?

The Hebrew word “*yadah*” [ya-DAH] translated in Psalm 32 as “will confess” *is related to the word “hodah” we saw in Day 24 often translated as “praise” or “thanks” in a different context.* Now, isn't that interesting!

“*Yadah*” carries with it the idea of opening one’s mouth to “fess up” when we know we’ve walked off of God’s path. The verb is in the present imperfect tense, which encourages an ongoing posture or readiness to confess both praise and our wrongdoings at any time. Praise and confession are not a “one and done” thing. If you think about it, confession of sin can end up as an occasion for praise to God for His grace!

Confession is, indeed, good for us, even if it’s uncomfortable.

The other Hebrew word we want to pay attention to in this context is “*Yada*” [*YA-da*]. While it sounds very similar to “*Yadah*” above, it has a different meaning. Here it is translated as “would inform” with the deeper connotations of “to acknowledge” or “to reveal.”

It’s also significant to see that Psalm 32 is a song designed for public worship, and it is an example of a singular person, David, offering acknowledgment and confession of personal sin to God in public. We begin to see where James may have gotten his ideas about confession of sin *within the context of a covenant worshipping community* being restorative and healing.

In James 5, the Greek word for “sick” or “weak” (ἀσθενέω [*astheneō*]) can indicate a need for both physical *and* interior healing. It points to the holistic restoration that Jesus came to give us. Since the body and soul are inextricably linked (*in Biblical terms, we are a living soul, rather than having a soul. See: Genesis 2:7*), then it makes sense that spiritual dis-ease

can manifest itself physically and that confession of sin (ἑξομολογέομαι [exo-molo-geho-mai]) among trusted friends in Christ can clear the path for total healing. *(Please note that James is NOT saying that sin is the underlying cause for all illness. See: John 9. But he is making the general observation that sin is often an obstacle to our healing on many levels.)*

*(**Historical note:** This idea of “confessing our sins to one another” becomes a founding principle for John Wesley and his Methodist spiritual formation small-groups known as “class” and “band meetings.”)*

5. Reflection Questions

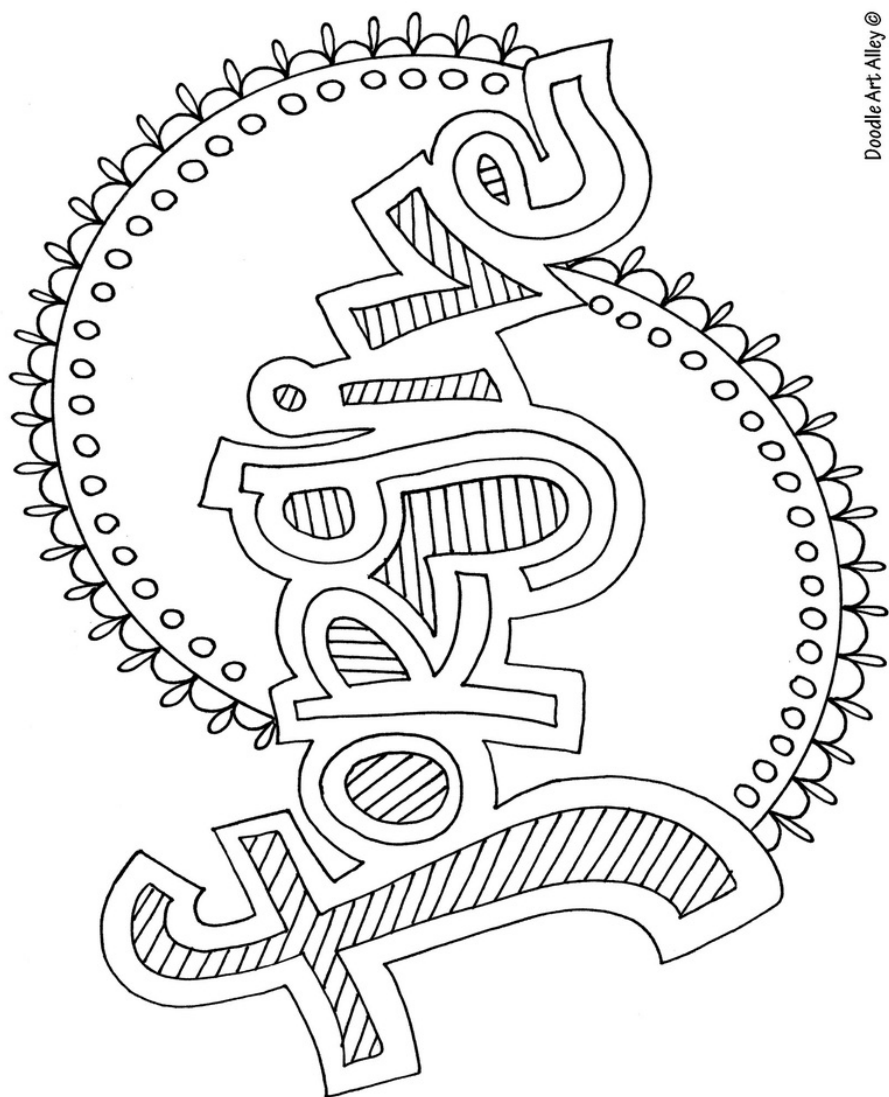
a. Personal Reflection: What do you need to open up your mouth and confess to the Lord today? Wrong-doing? Praise? Thanksgiving? All of the above?

b. Kingdom Reflection: The universal Body of Christ needs to 'fess up to its complicity in world affairs. We are not innocent victims. God has left us here and equipped us to play our part in bringing Heaven and Earth as we move toward the New Creation. (See: <http://bit.do/HeavenEarth>) How does this confession that the Church is a part of God's plan to continue His work of renewal inform your choices and your prayers?

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking:

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Biblical word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.

Notes:



Day 27:

The Forgiveness is Real

1. Center Down

Before we begin today's spiritual excursion, please take a few moments to breathe! Take three slow, deep breaths, expanding from your abdomen; try not to raise your shoulders. As you inhale, whisper, *"We are free..."* As you exhale whisper, *"...when we forgive."*

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

(Feel free to pause at any time during your reading to reflect on, thank, praise, or acknowledge God's stirring in your thoughts and emotions.)

"If a fellow believer hurts you, go and tell him—work it out between the two of you. If he listens, you've made a friend. If he won't listen, take one or two others along so that the presence of witnesses will keep things honest, and try again. If he still won't listen, tell the church. If he won't listen to the church, you'll have to start over from scratch, confront him with the need for repentance, and offer again God's forgiving love.

...

At that point Peter got up the nerve to ask, "Master, how many times do I forgive a brother or sister who hurts me? Seven?" Jesus replied, "Seven! Hardly. Try seventy times

seven. *“The kingdom of God is like a king who decided to square accounts with his servants. As he got under way, one servant was brought before him who had run up a debt of a hundred thousand dollars. He couldn’t pay up, so the king ordered the man, along with his wife, children, and goods, to be auctioned off at the slave market. “The poor wretch threw himself at the king’s feet and begged, ‘Give me a chance and I’ll pay it all back.’ Touched by his plea, the king let him off, erasing the debt.*

“The servant was no sooner out of the room when he came upon one of his fellow servants who owed him ten dollars. He seized him by the throat and demanded, ‘Pay up. Now!’ “The poor wretch threw himself down and begged, ‘Give me a chance and I’ll pay it all back.’ But he wouldn’t do it. He had him arrested and put in jail until the debt was paid. When the other servants saw this going on, we were outraged and brought a detailed report to the king. “The king summoned the man and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave your entire debt when you begged me for mercy. Shouldn’t you be compelled to be merciful to your fellow servant who asked for mercy?’ The king was furious and put the screws to the man until he paid back his entire debt.

And that’s exactly what My Father in heaven is going to do to each one of you who doesn’t forgive unconditionally anyone who asks for mercy.” (Matthew 18:15-17; 21:35, MSG)

For further exploration:

Video: <http://bit.do/HolemanForgiveness>

3. Kingdom Prayer

Our Father, we honor You, and we bless You. With all our souls and all that is within us, we bless Your holy Name. It is You, Father, who crowns us with love and tender mercies, and You fill our lives with good things. We give thanks to You and proclaim Your greatness. Lord, we will let the whole world know what You have done. We will sing to You the praises due Your Name and tell everyone about Your wonderful deeds. Thank You, Father, for loving us, forgiving us and saving us. Thank You for being patient with us. Your compassion towards us is unfailing and Your mercies are new every morning. Lord, Your faithfulness is great towards us.

Father, Your Word tells us that if we forgive those who have sinned against us, then You, our Heavenly Father, will forgive us. But, if we refuse to forgive others, You will not forgive us of our sins. Today we choose to forgive. We declare that we will be patient with people and forgive those who have offended us.

Holy Spirit, help all of us to forgive people who have hurt us. Heal our emotions that have been wounded and teach us how to love unconditionally. Continue to extend Your love and mercy toward us. Please remind us daily to use Your power that is living on the inside of us, which helps us in all things. Lord help us to forget the past so that we can move forward to the future as we press toward the mark of our higher calling in Christ Jesus.

Father, please forgive us for not being forgiving. Forgive us for thinking evil thoughts, and seeking revenge against people who have offended us. Forgive us for hatred and for not walking in love. Forgive us for gossiping, lying and for rehearsing in our minds what was said or done to us. I forgive_____for_____, and I release them and let it go. Father, forgive me for my sins. You said that if I confess my sins to You, You are faithful and just to forgive me and to cleanse me from all wickedness. Therefore, Father, please forgive me for:

Holy Spirit, remind us of those persons we need to forgive, and help us to forgive.

Holy Spirit, help us not to yield temptation but deliver us from the evil one.

God, You are a mighty fortress. You are subject to none, yet, all are subject to You. You are the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. You are the God who is, and was, and who is to come. To You, the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Yours is the Kingdom and the power and the glory forever. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture References for the written text: Psalm 103:1-5, I Chronicles 16:8-9, Lamentations 3:22-23, Matthew 6:14-15, Ephesians 4:2, I John 1:9, Philippians 3:14, Matthew 6:13, Revelation 1:8, I Timothy 1:17

4. Concepts to Consider

From Rev. J.D. Walt, seedbed.com

(<http://bit.do/Walt-Forgiveness>)

If ever I have taken a verse out of its context it is this one:

“Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything we ask for, it will be done for us by my Father in heaven.” (Matthew 18:19-20)

And frankly, I think it may be okay. There is a universal principle articulated here that has particular application in this context. Remember, we are talking about the situation where a person has confronted a lost member of the community to no avail. We next took two other witnesses to attempt to bring the person back from the brink of our waywardness, again to no avail. Finally, the church essentially excommunicated the person from our fellowship.

Let’s remember back to the Old Covenant and how it prescribed treatment in this kind of scenario:

“On the evidence of two witnesses or of three witnesses the one who is to die shall be put to death; a person shall not be put to death on the evidence of one witness. The hand of the witnesses shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterward the hand of all the people. So you shall purge the evil from your midst.” (Deuteronomy 17:6-7)

The two witnesses who were brought into the proceedings were actually ordered to be the ones

who cast the first stone. Jesus is essentially saying that the two witnesses should be the ones to cast the first prayers—to agree in the presence of God for the redemption and restoration of the offender. That’s quite a reversal, isn’t it?

Still processing all of this, Peter turns his thinking from the wayward sinner to his own relationships and asks this question:

“Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? Up to seven times?’”

Jesus answered, “I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.” (Matthew 18:21-22)

Peter thought he was keeping with the program with his idea. Jesus blew it out of the water. He’s telling Peter and us that his followers do not conform to conventional teaching. We are to be like Jesus, which means, when it comes to brothers and sisters sinning against us, we are to become people of unlimited mercy.

I struggle with this. How about you?

So is God’s forgiveness unlimited? If so, doesn’t that mean the same should be true for our forgiveness toward others?

Yep, this is a struggle.

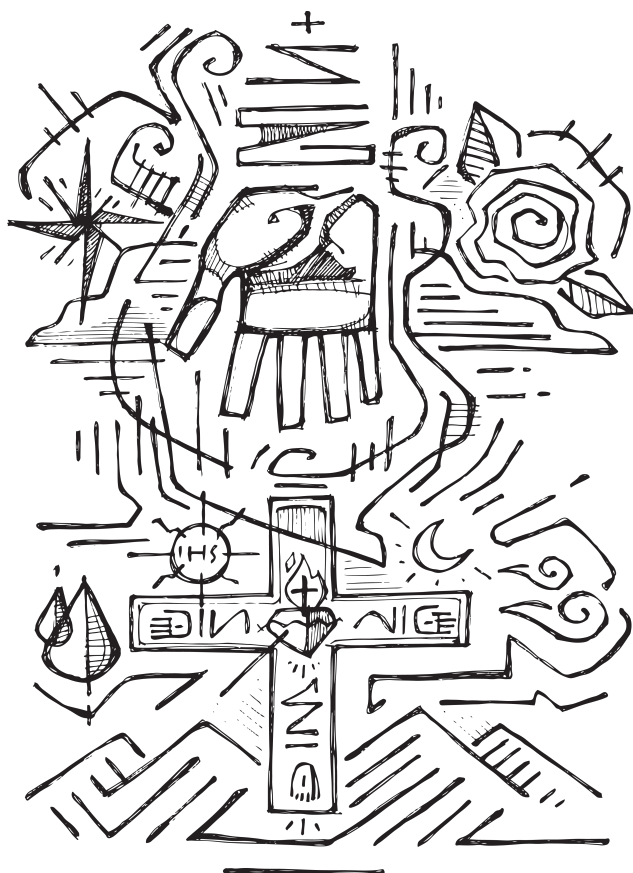
5. Reflection Questions

a. Personal Reflection: Remember, Biblical forgiveness is a process, not a moment. Don't allow unforgiveness to hold you hostage through anger or bitterness. Who needs your Holy-Spirit enabled forgiveness today?

b. Kingdom Reflection: Forgiving frees us for Kingdom work and Kingdom living. How could releasing injustice and hurt allow you to focus on joining God and His Church in the ministry of reconciliation for the wider world?

Optional Time of Centering/Soaking

If possible, take some time, perhaps 5 to 15 minutes, to get into a comfortable position and simply allow the Lord to minister to you at a deep level (Psalm 42:7). Turn off or put down all distractions. Close your eyes. Hold in your thoughts a meaningful word, phrase, or image from the Scripture you read today. Release all other thoughts and concerns into the Presence of the Lord. If your thoughts wander, that's okay, just gently return to your Biblical word, phrase, or image. You may want to set a timer.



Day 28:

Listening to See

1. Center Down

Before we begin today's spiritual excursion, please take a few moments to breathe! Take three slow, deep breaths, expanding from your abdomen; try not to raise your shoulders. As you inhale, whisper, "**Lord, open our ears...**" As you exhale whisper, "**...to see Your glory.**"

2. Slowly read aloud the following Scripture

(Feel free to pause at any time during your reading to reflect on, thank, praise, or acknowledge God's stirring in your thoughts and emotions.)

*For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him, **having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which He has called you**, what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might that He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And He put all things under*

His feet and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:15-23, ESV)

For further exploration:

Videos: <http://bit.do/HearingEyes>

3. Kingdom Prayer

Holy Father, we thank You for freedom of speech in the United States. Thank You for allowing us to live in a society where we are free to exchange and express ideas. Thank You for revealing the technological knowledge that allows global communications. Father, You are the great and awesome God who keeps Your covenant of unfailing love with those who love You and obey Your commands. Lord, You are our Master. Every good thing we have comes from You. You alone are our inheritance, the cup of our blessing. We bless You because You are the One who guides us; even at night our hearts instruct us. Father, we know that You are always with us, so we will not be shaken.

Awesome Father, we take authority over the spirit of the airwaves in our nation. We command Your Word, which we speak with boldness and faith, to interrupt the airwaves and destroy every word that is spoken by the media that does not align with Your will for our nation. We decree that every attempt to

misconstrue the Truth will be confused. We cancel the assignments of division, confusion, anger, wrath, lying and deceit that are being unleashed through the various forms of mass media. By faith, we declare that the heart of every station manager, editor, publisher, producer, reporter and writer will be pliable in Your hands. We silence the demonic voices that give direction and influence to the hearts of leaders in the area of communications. We command those who have intentionally used their positions to stir up strife and confusion to turn from evil and do good. In Jesus' Name, they will search for peace and work to maintain it. As kings of the King and lords of the Lord, we understand that death and life are in the power of our tongues, so we declare that only the truth will prevail and all distortions and misrepresentations will be exposed and rendered powerless.

Holy Spirit, please open the eyes and ears of the American people to hear, see, and understand the messages that are being communicated concerning the issues being raised in the local, state and national sectors of government. Please convict the hearts of the members of the media who intentionally cause strife and confusion in this nation, especially those who are believers. Expose hidden agendas, deceitful motives, wicked schemes, and subversive plots. Speak to the members of the American media about being impartial in their reporting. Direct the American public to not base their voting decisions on a thirty-second sound bite, but to research every candidate and seek Your will so they can make informed decisions.

Loving Father, forgive the members of the media for allowing their personal feelings to color their professional duties. Forgive station executives who have sold out their integrity for corporate greed and positioning. Forgive the citizens of our nation whose ears are itching to believe untruths from both political parties. Forgive those in our nation who incite racism, hatred, anger, and violence and forgive the members of the media who pander to these individuals. Lord, forgive me for *(list any sins that You have committed)*.

Holy Spirit, remind the members of the media of those they need to forgive and help them to be quick to forgive. As for me, Holy Spirit, bring to my remembrance those I need to forgive. *(Take a moment and ask the Holy Spirit to show You names or faces of people that You may need to forgive. As He shows You, say aloud, "I forgive name of person(s)." Now, trust the Lord to heal any wounds in Your soul caused by unforgiveness.)*

Holy Spirit, help the members of the media not to yield to temptation but deliver them from the evil one.

Almighty King, You are the great Redeemer, the Lord of Heaven's Armies. You are the First and the Last; there is no other God. You are the Creator who made all things. You alone stretched out the heavens. You alone are worthy of glory, honor, and power. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture References for the Written Text: Nehemiah 1:5, Psalm 16:2,5,7-8, Deuteronomy 10:16, Psalm 34:14, Proverbs 18:21, Romans 2:11, II Timothy 4:3, Matthew 6:13, Isaiah 44:6,24, Revelation 4:11

4. Concepts to Consider

As we close out our week focusing on a few of the concepts found in Jesus' Model Prayer, we will end where we began, in learning to lean in and listen and look deeply into the heart of Jesus. In everything that Our Master did, He was working to demonstrate Who He is, and who we are. Every healing and teaching was meant to reveal more about what the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth was meant to be and what the Church's role is in bringing this Ultimate Truth into reality.

Listening and seeing takes practice. That's why it's important to stop on a regular basis and just listen to the people and the world around us.

If you are able, right now, open a window or door, close your eyes and take a few minutes to listen to the sounds around you. What or who do you hear? Don't feel like you have to engage with what you're hearing at the moment. Just listen. *If your situation is not conducive to this exercise, you may want to listen to this natural soundscape through speakers or headphones: <http://bit.do/NatureAmbient>*

It is also necessary to learn to “listen with our eyes.” As Jesus said, sometimes people hear but do not listen; we look but do not see who God is and what He’s doing right in front of us.

Jesus scrambles our sensory expectations. He was and is both human and familiar while at the same time Divine and “wholly Other.” Our brains have a difficult time making sense of it all. This sensorial uncertainty is, I believe, exactly where we need to be in order to begin to observe and listen intently to the song of God’s love for all humanity. He has asked us to join His chorus. To learn “the unforced rhythms of grace.” It is a song we all used to sing together in a Garden long ago. It is a song humanity has forgotten, and it is a song that Jesus came to help us remember. It is His Spirit Who continues to whisper the words and melody into our ears even now... if we will just stop, look, and listen.

5. Reflection Questions

- a. **Personal Reflection**: Find time to engage with the Ephesians 1 passage above using *Lectio Divina* from the Week 2 guide.
What did you see? What did you hear?

b. Kingdom Reflection: The world is rushing madly on. How is God inviting us to slow down and be with Him? To see Him? Listen to Him? And in the process begin to truly see and hear the world and people around us, and ourselves. When we consider these perspectives, how will it change our engagement with people? How will it change the way we pray?



A Basic Guide for Small Covenant Groups

- A. Gather between 2-8 Christian friends, relatives, neighbors, and/or co-workers to meet with you regularly for approximately 1 hour. (*Could be shorter or longer, as the group agrees.*)
- Group members do not have to all be members of Windsor.
 - Ideally, the group will function best if you meet weekly, but meeting every 2 weeks, or a monthly check-in would be a good starting point.
 - Your group does not have to meet together indefinitely. A 3-month initial commitment is recommended. You may obviously extend beyond 3 months, as the situation demands and as the group agrees.
 - Be open to new members. If your group gets too large, allow a new group to form by splitting the group.
 - You can choose to meet in person, or virtually via conference call, FaceTime, Skype, Google Hangouts, Zoom, *etc.*
 - You are encouraged to meet in community wherever and whenever is convenient, appropriate, and comfortable for the group. Suggested locations: a group-member home, neighborhood/apartment club house, coffee shop, break room over lunch, library, *etc.*

B. The group is covenanting together for the purposes of Godly fellowship, encouragement, respectful listening, Biblical discussion, and prayer. You may select a leader, or decide to rotate the leadership role each time you meet.

• "Covenanting" means that appropriate confidentiality and Godly behavior, boundaries, and relationships are expected within the group. When you form a group, please register it online (<http://bit.ly/WVCFGroups>), or fill out the proper covenant form below and return it to Pastor Kim Orr, following the directions found at the bottom of each form.

A Suggested Group Meeting Agenda

- General greeting; introduction of new group participants.
- If possible, sing a hymn or praise song together.
- Open in prayer.
- Remind everyone of the Group Covenant guidelines (can simply read bullet points from Small Group Participant Covenant below).
- Discuss at least one topic from the current Prayer & Study Guide, as is appropriate for the week. Allow the Holy Spirit to lead. If you have designated a leader for the group or week, then they may pick a day or topic to lead the group through based on the guide. Use the Reflection Questions from any day as a good starting point to spur discussion.
- Share praises.
- Share prayer requests.
- Pray for one another.
- Dismiss

SMALL GROUP PARTICIPANT COVENANT

I will honor God, myself, and others by:

- Being on time to my group meeting.
- Listening respectfully. (Matthew 13:9)
- Praying for my group leader(s) and fellow group members. (Ephesians 6:18)
- Speaking with a kind tone, even when others may not. (Proverbs 15:1)
- Not gossiping; I will not share personal or sensitive information outside of the group. (Ephesians 4:29)
- Being dressed modestly. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- Setting appropriate interpersonal boundaries. No flirting, sexual conversations or jokes. (Ephesians 5:3-4)
- Not drinking alcohol during any Windsor Village Church Family endorsed or sponsored groups or event(s). (Proverbs 20:1; 1 Timothy 3:2-3)
- Respecting the rules, property, and managers of the location where our group meets. (Philippians 2:3)

By signing this covenant card, I am agreeing that I will, by the grace of God, abide by the above statements, and I will respectfully receive input and direction from Windsor Village Church Family supervisors and leadership.

Date:

Group Participant Name (printed):

email:

phone:

Signature:

You are encouraged to register your group online at <http://bit.ly/WVCFGroups> OR you can email a photo of your signed covenant form to korr@wvumc.com OR tear out this form and mail it the "old school way" to Pastor Kim Orr, WVCF, 6011 W. Orem Dr., Houston, TX 77085.

SMALL GROUP LEADER COVENANT

(Titus 2; James 3:1-2)

I will honor God and my call as a group leader by treating those in my group with respect by:

- Arriving 5-10 minutes early to greet group members, and be prepared for the group session. (2 Timothy 2:15)
- Listening and gently encouraging participation by all group members (don't let one or two people dominate discussion). (Matthew 13:9)
- Regularly praying for all group members. (1 Samuel 12:23)
- Speaking with a kind tone, even when others may not. (Proverbs 15:1)
- Not gossiping; I will not share personal or sensitive information outside of the group, unless Pastoral attention is needed. (Ephesians 4:29)
- Being dressed modestly. (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
- Setting appropriate interpersonal boundaries. No flirting with or dating of participants; No sexual conversations or jokes. (Ephesians 5:3-4)
- Not drinking alcohol during any Windsor Village Church Family endorsed or sponsored group meetings or event(s). (Proverbs 20:1; 1 Timothy 3:2-3)
- Respecting the rules, property, and managers of the location where your group meets. (Philippians 2:3)

By signing this covenant card, I am agreeing that I will, by the grace of God, abide by the above statements, and I will respectfully receive input and direction from Windsor Village Church Family supervisors and leadership.

Date:

Printed Leader Name:

email:

phone:

Signature:

You are encouraged to register your group online at <http://bit.ly/WVCFGroups> OR your can email a photo of your signed covenant from to korr@wvumc.com OR tear out this form and mail it "old school" to attn: Pastor Kim Orr, 6011 W. Orem Dr., Houston, TX 77085.

Notes:

**Windsor Village Church Family 6011
W. Orem, Houston, TX 77085
713-723-8187**

Prayer Power Line: 713-721-4821

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Kirbyjon H. Caldwell, Senior Pastor